

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending in the application. It is gratefully acknowledged that Claims 2, 5, 6 and 9 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Examiner has rejected Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10-16, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Narvinger et al. (U.S. Patent 6,868,075). The Examiner has rejected Claims 17 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Narvinger et al. in view of Sakoda et al. (U.S. Patent 6,381,234).

Please cancel Claim 2 without prejudice. Please amend Claims 1, 3, 4 and 7 as set forth herein. No new matter has been added. Claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 2.

Please note that Narvinger et al. does not qualify as prior art under either §102(e) or §103(a). The earliest date Narvinger et al. can rely on is its provisional application date of September 28, 1999. The priority dates of the present application are June 25, 1999 and July 7, 1999, both of which predate Narvinger et al. Since the verified English language translations have been filed in the application, all of the rejections must be withdrawn.

Based on at least the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1 and 3-20 is respectfully requested.

Independent Claims 1, 7, 8 and 12-20 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Without conceding the patentability per se of dependent Claims 3-6 and 9-11, these are likewise believed to be allowable by virtue of their dependence on their respective amended independent claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of dependent Claims 3-6 and 9-11 is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, all of the claims pending in the Application, namely, Claims 1 and 3-20, are believed to be in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference or personal interview would facilitate resolution of any remaining matters, the Examiner may contact Applicants' attorney at the number given below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul J. Farrell", written in a cursive style.

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